CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the present global society, learning English as a foreign language is very important and essential to daily life, as English serves as a necessary tool for communication, education, seeking knowledge, livelihood and creating understanding of cultures and visions of the world community (The Ministry of Education. 2008). Every country has its language, but English is incorporated into educational system in numerous countries all around the world. Mastering English in the global era is very important because English is the most widely used language in international events. Many countries use English in their affairs, such as business, politics, education, science and technology. This is why English becomes a very important language (Biemiller. 1999 ; cited in Kulkittiyanon. 2011).

Due to the important roles of English in all affairs, Thailand also gives emphasis to English education. Therefore, English is a compulsory subject in all education levels from primary school to university level. The purpose of English language learning for Thai students can utilize it for academic and professional tools of worldwide communication in their lives, such as, to prepare themselves for study at higher level, to access information through the internet, to gain science and technology which mostly written in English, and to contact with foreigners around the world.

One of the essential components of all language as well as English language is vocabulary. Huyen and Nga (2003 : 2) state that vocabulary plays an important role in learning a foreign language. It is an element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately. Similarly, Rubin and Thompson (1994 : 79 ; cited in Seelakun. 2008 : 1) affirm that one cannot speak, understand, read, or write a foreign language without knowing a lot of words. Moreover, Zhihong (2000) mentions that words are very crucial for communication. They are the basis unit of language. With a variety of vocabulary, a person can communicate effectively even though he or she may be very weak in grammatical knowledge. Additionally, vocabulary is examined more important for language learning than grammar. Wilkins (1997 : 19 ; cited in Tongpao. 2007) notes that without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. Krashen (n.d ; cited in Lewis. 1993) affirms that when students travel, they do not hold up grammar books, they carry dictionaries. Vocabulary should be learned from early education. It is very confrontational for teachers to seek out methods for their students to learn new vocabulary. Therefore, the importance of vocabulary is a very essential component of any language as well as the core of language learning and communication which is at the heart of mastering a foreign language. So students who have limited vocabulary knowledge may find it more difficult to convey and that may defend them from learning a foreign language.

As an English teacher at Ban Nong Chum Sang School, a primary school in Huai Thalaeng District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, the researcher examines problems in English learning classroom are students' vocabulary, their basic language

skills and motivation in learning. Most of Prathomsuksa 4 students lack vocabulary knowledge for English learning in all area of spelling, pronunciation, understanding the meaning, and ability to recall words. They are not able to use English language to communicate in real life. They are not confident to use the language both within and outside the classroom. The students lack opportunities to practice English in the language learning classroom.

Tongpao (2007 : 2) notes that students realize the importance of vocabulary when learning a foreign language, but most of them feel bored of learning vocabulary because of several factors. Firstly, most students usually learn vocabulary passively through the teacher's explanations for meanings, pronunciation, spelling and grammar usage. In most cases, students only take notes of new words on the paper and try to chant the lists of new single words. In addition, most students only learn meanings of new vocabulary and think that they already know the words, as a result, they ignore all other functions of the words and that makes them unable to properly use or apply the words in different contexts. Chanthiam (2009 : 1) claims that one of the failures is the ineffective traditional method of vocabulary teaching. It is not interesting, but boring to the students. These could make students easily forget the words they have already learned. Moreover, learning words by memorization makes students unhappy, moody, and it sometimes leads them to misunderstanding the meaning of the words.

There are various interesting activities that English teachers can become involved with and offer to the students. If students think English learning are fun and interesting, they can participate in the activities, they then have positive attitude towards the English language. Teacher should be imaginative and creative to build

the enjoyable teaching-learning condition based on young learners' characteristics. There are several methods to create enjoyable condition for children to learn English such as games, songs, pictures, stories, dance, model making. From the researcher's experience in teaching for a number of years completely agrees with Talak-Kiryk (2010) who have suggested that games are fun activities that promote interaction, thinking, learning, and problem solving strategies.

Game is one of the most fascinating activities to help improve students' vocabulary. Games involve many factors including rules, competition, relaxation, and learning, in particular. Recently, playing games in the classroom do not only increase students' ability in using language, as students get more chances to use language with a purpose the situations provided, but it can also connect them to the real usage of language outside the class (Deesri. 2002 : 1). In addition, games are tools that enhance the motivation of the students and relaxation learning atmosphere. Lee. (1979), Richard-Amato (1988), and Huyen and Nga (2003 : 14) agree that games are good learning tool for students who just start to learn a new language. Games can contribute to a relaxed environment, which help learners remember new words faster and enable them to use the target language rather than to think about its form. Similarly, Youxin (2010 : 15) affirms that it is feasible to use games to motivate students. Both teachers and students can get benefits from games in that they can lower students' anxiety, sustain students' interest in learning English, and help them learn the language.

As we can see, games provide many advantages for students and can solve problems of language learning. Therefore, to cope with the problems faced in English

teaching more effectively, the researcher needs to use games for Prathomsuksa 4 students in order to improve students' vocabulary.

Consequently, this study will be utilized to improve vocabulary learning skill of Prathomsuksa 4 students, and to develop learning process in English class. Furthermore, this study will increase level of students' satisfactions toward using games for improving their vocabulary learning skill, and will be a useful guideline to develop the learning management in the future.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study is conducted for the following purposes:

1.2.1 To find the efficiency of the lesson plans for teaching English vocabulary through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students to meet the criterion set at 80/80.

1.2.2 To compare the students' English vocabulary achievement before and after learning through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students.

1.2.3 To investigate the level of students' satisfaction toward learning English vocabulary through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1.3.1 What is the efficiency of the lesson plans for teaching English vocabulary through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students?

1.3.2 Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores after learning English vocabulary through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students?

1.3.3 In what level is the students' satisfaction of learning English vocabulary through games for Prathomsuksa 4 students?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

The posttest mean score of Prathomsuksa 4 students toward learning English vocabulary through games is higher than those of the pretest.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The results of this study provide useful information for teachers, students and language learners who study English as a foreign language. It can be applied in the following ways:

1.5.1 The finding of this research can be useful to the readers who are interested in analyzing teaching vocabulary of elementary school.

1.5.2 The results can be used by the teachers and students to solve the problems of teaching and learning English vocabulary through games in the classroom.

1.5.3 This study can be enhanced the students' satisfaction with learning English vocabulary through games.

1.5.4 The results can be used by the teachers to provide the better technique for teaching vocabulary in elementary class.

1.5.5 This study can be used by the research to evaluate the students' vocabulary mastery.

1.5.6 Based on the results of this study, it can be used as teachers' resource or guidelines for further studies into teaching English vocabulary through games in the future.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research

Some limitations of the research are listed below. Inferences and conclusions from this study must take these limitations into account:

1.6.1 Population and Samples

1.6.1.1 The populations of this study were 14 Prathomsuksa 4 students who enrolled in the fundamental English course (E14101) in the second semester of academic year 2011 at Ban Nong Chum Sang School, Huai Thalaeng District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province under Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 2.

1.6.1.2 The samples of this study were 14 Prathomsuksa 4 students who enrolled in the fundamental English course (E14101) in the second semester of academic year 2011 at Ban Nong Chum Sang School, Huai Thalaeng District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province under Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 2. They were selected by purposive sampling technique.

1.6.2 Variables of the Study

1.6.2.1 The independent variable was teaching English vocabulary through games.

1.6.2.2 The dependent variables were English vocabulary achievement and students' satisfaction toward learning English vocabulary through games.

1.6.3 Contents of the Study

English vocabulary for Prathomsuksa 4 students, is based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). The contents are comprised of 10 word groups: numbers 11-30, things in the classroom, colors, animals, parts of body, fruits and vegetables, occupations, places, my family, and months of the year.

1.6.4 Duration of this Study

This study was conducted in the second semester of academic year 2011 for 6 weeks, for a total of 12 periods of teaching, including pretest and posttest. Each period takes 60 minutes for teaching English vocabulary through games.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The terms used in this research carry a different interpretation in a different context. So, to avoid any confusion, the following definitions and explanation of some of the terms are used to explain in this study.

1.7.1 Vocabulary refers to those English words, which were listed in the Fundamental English syllabus constructed by General Education Department, Ministry of Education. The vocabulary consist of 10 word groups: numbers, colors, months of the year, parts of the body, fruits and vegetables, family, animals, places, occupations, and things in the classroom.

1.7.2 Vocabulary Achievement refers to vocabulary mean scores from understanding the meaning and spelling vocabulary, which can be measured by the vocabulary test, both for pretest and posttest.

1.7.2.1 **Pretest** comprises of 40 items with multiple choice which the students take before learning English vocabulary through games.

1.7.2.2 **Posttes**t is the same test as pretest. The students take it after learning English vocabulary through games.

1.7.3 Learning Vocabulary refers to the methods used for developing plans to enable vocabulary to be learned, retained and recalled by using games

1.7.4 Games refer to the activities for learning English vocabulary selected from commercial book, and also from the internet.

1.7.5 Efficiency refers to the quality of the lesson plans for teaching English vocabulary through games. It facilitates and reinforces students' learning the English vocabulary effectively.

1.7.6 Criterion Set 80/80 refers to the mean scores that were used to find the efficiency:

1.7.6.1 First Criterion 80 (efficiency of the process) is the percentage of the students' total mean scores from the activities scores of lesson plans for teaching English vocabulary through games.

1.7.6.2 Second Criterion 80 (efficiency of the outcomes) is the percentage of the students' mean scores from achievement test (posttest).

1.7.7 Satisfaction refers to the feeling of Prathomsuksa 4 students that indicates favor, pleasure, and gladness which the students reveal toward learning English vocabulary through games.

1.7.8 Students refer to 14 Prathomsuksa 4 students who studied at Ban Nong Chum Sang School, Huai Thalaeng District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province under

Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 2, in the second semester of academic year 2011.

1.8 Overviews of the Research

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One has presented statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, research hypothesis, significance of the study, definition of key terms, scope and limitations of the study. Chapter Two contains a review of literature on the basic education core curriculum, vocabulary in second language acquisition, the use of games in English language teaching, the role of teachers in teaching with games, the steps of teaching with games, efficiency, concepts and theories of satisfaction, and previous studies. Chapter Three describes the action research by presenting population and samples, the instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Chapter Five contains a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the study, discussion of the findings, recommendations for practice, and for further study.

1.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter mainly indicates the statement of the problem, followed by purposes and questions of the research. The present study also provides the hypothesis, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study. The last outline is definition of key terms. The next chapter, Chapter Two, will focus on the review of the related literature.